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THOU VACHE

As often as I have read Chaucer's *Truth: Balade de Bon Conseyl*, I have wondered at the supposed jest in the *Envoy*. Why should Chaucer address any man as *Thou vache*? The fact is that there is no joke; the man's name was Sir Philip la Vache, or de la Vache.¹ Association with Chaucer is suggested at once by the fact that he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Chaucer's friend, Sir Lewis Clifford.

References to him are so abundant that it is easy to reconstruct, in large part, his career, to form some idea of his character, and even to give a guess as to the occasion which led Chaucer to write the poem.

The Vache family was connected with Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire (later to be associated with Milton), at least as early as 1237 when Ralph de la Vache obtained a tract of twenty acres of land there.² He may, of course, have held other lands to which this was merely an addition.³

Descended from him and in all probability his son or grandson, was Sir Richard la Vache, or de la Vache, who is frequently mentioned between 1273 and 1309 as a landowner in Buckinghamshire,⁴ Chalfont St. Giles itself being named in this connection in 1303.⁵

The first reference to him is in 1265—a "remission" of the King's indignation and rancor by reason of the late disturbance, for trespass committed with several others while they were in the munition at Windsor.⁶ This seems to show that Vache had supported Simon de Montfort.

¹ La Vache and De la Vache are the usual forms; but we find "*Monsieur Philipp Vach*" and "*Dame Vache*" in the *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, I, 136-37.

² *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1234-37, p. 525.

³ Beltz (*Memorials of the Garter*, 1841, p. 106) says that the Vache family may be "presumed to have been of Gascon origin." It is true that in 1333 one John de la Vacarie is mentioned among merchant vintners of Gascony (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1330-34, p. 429); but there is nothing to show that he was related to the Buckinghamshire family, and the name may not have been peculiar to Gascony.

⁴ Cf. *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1272-79, p. 56; and 1279-88, p. 305, where part of Shenley is named; also *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1281-92, p. 80.

⁵ *Calendar Charter Rolls*, 1300-26, III, 34. Here "Shenle," "Maunsel," and "Bekenesfeld" are also named.

⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1258-66, pp. 461-62.

In 1278, his name occurs in a list of men "bound" to Edmund, Earl of Cornwall—in his case, for 450 marks.¹ As, according to Leland, Berkhamstead, only a few miles from Chalfont St. Giles, belonged to Cornwall, Vache was probably one of his tenants (*Itinerary*, ed. Toulmin-Smith, 1902, I-III, p. 105).

In 1280, Richard Vache owed the Countess of Arundel 300 marks for the custody and marriage of heirs in Maunsel, and was acquitted of that sum.²

In 1285 he was one of the attorneys appointed by the Earl of Surrey upon going abroad.³

In 1309 he was one of three commissioners in Buckinghamshire appointed to levy a twenty-fifth for the war in Scotland.⁴

His son, Sir Matthew,⁵ is often mentioned in the Rolls between 1322 and 1344 as a country gentleman of substance and importance in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

In 1322 and 1335 he was on tax commissions.⁶

In 1325, he owed £40, to be levied on his lands in Hertfordshire.⁷

In 1328, he and another man owed, curiously enough, a rope-maker of London £300.⁸ Possibly the same debt is alluded to, the following year, as due from him to a citizen of London.⁹

The last allusion to him in the Rolls seems to be in a deed of land in 1344, witnessed by him and his son, another Sir Richard.¹⁰

This younger Sir Richard, the father of Philip, was a prominent figure at the court of Edward III.

The first allusion to him seems to be April 20, 1337, when he obtained letters of protection to go abroad on the King's service with William de Montague, Earl of Salisbury.¹¹

This was undoubtedly the embassy which arrived at Valenciennes early in May to make peace with Jacob van Artevelde, headed by the Bishop of Lincoln and the earls of Salisbury and Huntingdon.

¹ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1272-79, pp. 510-11.

² *Ibid.*, 1279-88, p. 110.

³ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1281-92, p. 192.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1307-13, p. 185.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1361-64, p. 436.

⁶ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1318-23, p. 447; and *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1334-38, p. 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1323-27, p. 349.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1327-30, p. 421.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 559.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1343-46, p. 337; and cf. *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1361-64, p. 436, where the three generations are given.

¹¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1334-38, p. 421.

According to Froissart, there were ten "chevaliers bannerets," and forty other knights, "jeunes bacheliers."¹ In all probability Vache was one of the latter.²

This same year Vache witnessed a grant of land to Sir John Molyns by the Earl of Huntingdon;³ and another grant to Molyns by the Earl of Salisbury.⁴

In 1339, he, together with the earls of Salisbury and Northampton and Sir Geoffrey le Scrope, witnessed at Valenciennes a deed of land to Molyns by Sir Walter Manny.⁵

There are various entries of money that this Vache owed: as 1336, £10, due to John Fitz Nichol (*Calendar Close Rolls*, 1333-37, p. 650); 1339, £14, due to Thomas Bonet, brushwood seller of London (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1337-39, p. 101); 1345, £100 due to the Earl of Arundel (*Calendar Close Rolls*, 1343-46, p. 588); 1351, £40 due to Thomas de Brembre, clerk (*ibid.*, 1349-54, p. 397). Of money due him, we find mentioned in 1359 a debt of £200 to him and another knight (*ibid.*, 1354-60, p. 625).

In 1338 he was on the list of those receiving a general pardon for offenses against the peace of Edward II and Edward III.⁶

In 1346 he had two pensions of £20 and 20 marks, respectively, for his good service and his "stay with the King."⁷

By this time he was married, as, by his own statement, he had a son born in 1346.⁸

In 1349, Amy de la Vache had a yearly grant of a tun of Gascon wine from Queen Philippa. She was almost certainly his wife, and probably a lady-in-waiting on the Queen.⁹

¹ Ed. Buchon, I, chap. LVIII, p. 57. See also *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1334-38, pp. 420-21.

² In the Shenley dispute in 1283-84, his grandfather is called Sir Richard de la Vache, the elder (*Calendar Close Rolls*, 1279-88, p. 305), which at first glance suggests that the second Richard was born before that time. He would then have been fifty-three or fifty-four years old when he is first mentioned in connection with the Valenciennes embassy, and, later, would have been given important offices when he was nearly eighty. This is not impossible; but, on the other hand, there may have been an intermediate Richard, brother of Matthew, and uncle of the younger Richard.

³ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1333-37, p. 259.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1337-39, p. 286.

⁵ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1338-40, pp. 395, 409-10. Molyns, who was made keeper of the king's hawks in 1338 (*ibid.*, 1338-40, p. 47), was a neighbor of Vache's and probably related to the family, but I have not been able to determine the relationship.

⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1338-40, p. 159.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1345-48, pp. 157, 445.

⁸ *Calendar of Papal Registers*, Petitions, I, 1342-1419, p. 334.

⁹ Beltz, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

In 1352, he was sent on the King's service, "for the safeguarding of the King's shipping and merchants on the sea."¹

In 1354 and 1356, he was on commissions of *oyer and terminer* in Buckinghamshire.²

In 1355, he was made Knight of the Garter, in the place of Lord de Lisle;³ and upon his death was succeeded by Henry Percy, the first earl of Northumberland.

March 5, 1356, that is, some months before the battle of Poitiers, he was granted 100 marks "for good service in the strenuous bearing of the King's standard in his wars." This was in addition to the 50 marks lately granted him for life, or until he had an equivalent of land or rent.⁴

This entry shows that he was distinguished for his courage, and suggests that he was ambitious to increase his estates in the country. In 1361, he acquired the manor of Asshyndon or Asshedon (Bucks.) for life, at a rent of one rose at midsummer, for the first seven years, £20 a year for the next three, and after that, £60 a year during the grantor's life.⁵ The peculiar terms of the grant perhaps mean that a good deal of money needed to be spent on the property before it would yield returns.

In 1363, he acquired seemingly about half of the manor of Chalfont St. Giles, in which he had previously owned some land.⁶

Meanwhile he was made Constable of the Tower for life, January 26, 1361,⁷ and held this office until his death.⁸

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1350-54, p. 240.

² *Ibid.*, 1354-58, pp. 124, 455, 498.

³ Beltz, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-7.

⁴ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1354-58, pp. 360-61. The changes in the form of the annuity are curious. In 1348, his 50 marks were paid out of the farm of the alien priory of St. Nicholas-lez-Angers, in Buckinghamshire—doubtless a convenient point for receiving them (*ibid.*, 1348-50, p. 195). In 1356, his 100 marks he asks to have paid thus: £59 from the priory of Neuton Lungevill and 11 marks 6s. 8d. from St. Nicholas (*ibid.*, 1354-58, p. 434). In 1358, his grants are summed up as worth £100 a year and settled as follows: the castle of Bolsover (Derby), worth £40 a year; £10 from the farm of William Bohun, Earl of Northampton, and £50 at the Exchequer (*ibid.*, 1358-61, p. 42). Possibly this partition was for convenience in changes of residence. In 1359, when he was keeper of Clipston (see below), his fee of £10 12s. 11d., and £50 of his annuity were exchanged for the manor "Mammesfeld" (Nottinghamshire), which came into the King's hands upon the death of the queen-mother, Isabel, and which was rated at £60 a year (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1358-61, p. 209).

⁵ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1360-64, pp. 265, 276.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 549-50, 552-53.

⁷ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1358-61, p. 531.

⁸ He is mentioned as in office December 29, 1365 (*Calendar Close Rolls*, 1364-68, p. 209), and he was dead before January 21, 1366.

His deputy was one Thomas la Vache; but there is no indication as to the relation-

May 23, 1358, he was given for life the bailiwick of the stewardship of Shirewod (Sherwood) Forest with the keeping of the manor and park of Clipston and of hays in the forest, together with windfalls, chiminages, expeditation of dogs, agistments, pannages, and other profits.¹

In 1363, he is called chief forester of Sherwood.²

Before September 24, 1361, he was made constable of Windsor Castle and keeper of the royal park at Windsor.³ In connection with this office the Rolls mention, July 10, 1362, an interesting custom dating from the time of Henry II, by which he or his men were bound to deliver to the prior and convent of St. Peter at Westminster, on the eve of St. Peter's Chains, eight bucks and two harts, and to wind their horns twice before the high altar at Westminster.⁴

October 10, 1363, he received a pardon for all trespasses of vert and venison committed by himself or others in his service.⁵

November 20, 1363, he went abroad on the King's service,⁶ and ten days later he was made exempt for life from service on assizes and similar duties.⁷

He died in January, 1366. According to the *Inquisitiones post mortem*,⁸ he was seised of Maunsfeld, and of lands in Sutton, Carleton, and Lyndeby in Nottinghamshire; but the list is manifestly incomplete. His chief holdings were in four other counties: Buckingham, Oxford, Cambridge, and Hertford.

Like Chaucer's father, Sir Richard la Vache was of the Court, but he was a person of much more importance. He began his career as a soldier, and gradually acquired the estates and the standing of a country gentleman. John Chaucer began life as a citizen and accumulated land and tenements in London. He did not attain knight-hood, or seemingly aspire to country estates. Vache, on the other hand, although he owned a little property in Broad Street⁹—possibly

ship of the two men (*ibid.*, pp. 152, 156, and 1361-64, p. 547). A Walter de la Vache is also mentioned as one of the King's yeomen (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1354-58, p. 632); but his relationship to the others does not appear.

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1361-64, p. 274.

² *Ibid.*, p. 315.

³ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1360-64, p. 214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁵ *Calendar Close Rolls*, p. 403.

⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, p. 424.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

⁸ II, p. 277.

⁹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1361-64, p. 518, and 1364-67, p. 335.

merely a town house—must have spent most of his later years in the country.

The first allusion to Philip la Vache is in 1358 when Sir Richard petitioned the Pope on behalf of his son, Philip la Vache, aged twelve, for a benefice of the value of £30 in the gift of the Bishop of Lincoln.¹ The petition was granted.

January 21, 1366, he became the ward of William de Wykeham, described as "the King's clerk," who was given the wardship of his lands in Buckingham and Cambridge, said to be held in chief, and the marriage of the heir.²

July 16, 1366, Philip la Vache, "chevalier," went beyond the seas by the King's license.³

In 1370 he was said to have "proved his age," and so became seised of his father's estates.⁴

It is curious that he should have gone abroad immediately after his father's death, and only a few months before he himself came of age, thus leaving his lands almost four years in wardship. Whether he was fighting in the Far East, or for some other reason unable to return, or whether his father, in 1358, to make sure of the benefice, had represented him as several years older than he was, is a matter for speculation.

May 8, 1374, he received a gift of 50 marks from John of Gaunt, Clifford himself being entered for twice as much.⁵

In 1375, he was associated with Sir Philip de Courtenay, the admiral of the fleet in the West, in the "gift and sale" of the marriage of a ward to "Dame Alice Perriers."⁶

Like Chaucer, he began his career as a soldier. In 1376, he and Sir John Harleston, then captain of Guines, were associated in the

¹ *Calendar Papal Registers*, Petitions, I, 1342–1419, p. 334. At the same time he asked for a benefice, value £40, in the gift of the Bishop of Salisbury, for his son Edward, aged eleven, which was also granted. In 1361, he asked for a canonry at Lincoln with the expectation of a prebend, for Edward, then said to be thirteen (*ibid.*, p. 371), which was granted. I have found no further mention of this Edward.

² *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1364–67, p. 196. He also witnesses a large grant of land to Wykeham, July 4, 1375 (*Calendar Close Rolls*, 1374–77, pp. 244–45).

³ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1364–67, p. 298. He had letters of attorney for three persons. One of them was William Strete, whose name was later associated with Vache's in an affair which may have been the cause of the "wretchedness" alluded to by Chaucer in the poem. See p. 17, below.

⁴ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1369–74, p. 157.

⁵ *John of Gaunt's Register*, 1911, No. 1, 429.

⁶ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1374–77, p. 280.

capture of two distinguished French prisoners whose ransoms were £1500 and £1000 respectively.¹

This same year he and Nicholas or Collard Dabrichecourt lent Sir Philip le Spenser 1,000 marks, which were duly repaid.²

He was also associated in 1376 with Sir Thomas Moryeux, Sir William Beauchamp, and others in a mainprise of £200 for a case of trespass.³

He was made a Knight of the Chamber at the close of Edward III's reign (September 30, 48th year);⁴ and was a witness early in the reign of Richard to tell what he knew about Alice Perrers in the case of Richard Lyons. He declared that he was summoned to the King's chamber at Shene "to hear what ought to be done; and when he heard the matter, he would not stay, but went forth out of the chamber."⁵

His office as Knight of the Chamber was confirmed by Richard II, February 3, 1378, with a grant of £50 payable at the Exchequer.⁶ This was only about a month before similar grants were confirmed to Chaucer and his wife.⁷

Little more than a month after Nicholas Brembre and John Philpot were associated with Chaucer in the customs work, they with Hadley and Walworth (Walworth and Brembre had been with Chaucer in 1374-75) raised a loan of £5,000 for the King, for which he pledged some of the royal plate and crown jewels. Of these things, three large golden crowns with rubies (baleis), diamonds, sapphires, and other stones, and pearls, were in the keeping of M. Philip la Vache.⁸ This fact shows to what extent he was trusted by the King.

Before this time, he had been made keeper of the royal manor and park of Woodstock; and April 25, 1379, this office was extended

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, 1727, VII, 103; and *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1374-77, p. 316.

² *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1374-77, p. 322.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁴ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 104.

⁵ *Rolls of Parliament*, III, 13.

⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 104. Later, exchanged for £50 a year out of the issues of Buckingham and Oxford (August 28, 10th R. II). This was probably for convenience, as he lived much in the country (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1385-89, p. 221).

⁷ *Life Records*, 213-14.

⁸ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 25. Here only two are mentioned. They are, however, described in a document published by Rymer (VII, 187-88) as: "la meilloure corone; la corone de Spaigne; la tierce meilloure corone"; i.e., they were the official crowns, not mere diadems. In this document (March 19, 1378) Vache is said to be the guardian of certain gold vessels.

for life at a yearly rental of £127 16s. 6d. at which it was granted October 7, 50th Edward III (1376), and confirmed February 3, 1st Richard II (1378), although investigation had shown that it was then worth £216 17s. a year.¹ If this valuation is right, Vache must have cleared almost £100 a year out of this grant alone.

Before this time he had married Elizabeth Clifford, as July 2, 1380, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, paid 40s. for a license permitting James de Beel, a merchant of Lucca, and Amice, his wife, to grant to himself and eight others (one of whom was Walworth) the reversion, in fee, of a moiety of the manor of Combe Bysset, Wiltshire, after the death of Elizabeth, wife of Philip la Vache, Knight, they being her tenants for life.²

Elizabeth la Vache also held the manor of Hognorton in chief, after William Molyns, Knight, who was dead August 11, 1382.³ Evidently an attempt was made to get this land away from the Vaches, for under the date just given is recorded a pardon to William Nafferton and three others for obtaining the reversion of it from Molyns without the royal license, and permission to grant the reversion to John de Harleston, Richard Abberbury, and others. Harleston was Vache's old companion in arms, and he was repeatedly associated with Abberbury (also spelled Adderbury).⁴

Lady Vache evidently held a good deal of property in her own right. Besides her share of Combe Bysset, and the manor of Hognorton,⁵ she held also land at Great Mussenden (Bucks.) worth 16 marks 12d. a year.⁶

In 1399, her father, with three others, granted to her and her husband the manor of Bury, in Chalfont St. Giles, in fee tail, with remainder to their heirs.⁷ It is interesting to note that the reversion was assigned next to Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, with whom Chaucer went on a mission to Flanders in 1377; to Sir Thomas

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 341. ² *Ibid.*, p. 526. ³ *Ibid.*, 1381-85, p. 162.

⁴ Abberbury, at this very time, was Justice of the Peace for Oxford with Vache (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1381-85, pp. 140, 195, 247); in 1395, he was associated with Vache in the wardship of the heir and lands of John Fitz Elyz (*ibid.*, 1391-96, p. 1594); 1397, he was associated with Vache and William Willicotes in the acquisition of a manor in Gloucestershire (*ibid.*, 1396-99, p. 136); in 1397, also, he and Vache with several others audited the accounts of the King's clerk who had collected the moneys due to Queen Anne at the time of her death (*ibid.*, 1396-99, pp. 245, 518).

⁵ *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, III, D, 977, p. 520.

⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1381-85, p. 264.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1396-99, p. 553.

Blount, and to Sir Thomas Clanevowe, to whom with Vache and Sir John Cheney, Clifford willed most of his property.¹ Clanevowe was also one of the supervisors of Vache's will.²

It was doubtless on Lady Vache's account that in 1393 Clifford had enfeoffed Vache together with the Earl of Salisbury, Cheney, and one other in the Welsh castle and property of Ewyas Harald.³

In addition to the keepership of Woodstock, Vache was appointed for life, October 1, 1383, keeper of the King's manor and park of Chiltern (later, King's) Langley.⁴ He succeeded William Strete, whom he had made one of his attorneys in 1366. In connection with this appointment, we find the first and last misfortune of which mention has survived in his career. October 20, 1386, he surrendered the office, here described as worth 4*d.* a day, but doubtless worth very much more through perquisites, to Thomas Atte Lee, one of the King's squires.⁵ A reason for his surrender is suggested in the fact that September 26, 1387, a commission of four was appointed to inquire into damages done to the park in the time of Vache and Strete, "farmers" thereof.⁶ Exactly a week later, October 3, 1387, Vache's name was added to the list of commissioners, and Strete alone was held responsible for the damages.⁷

That this was in large part, if not entirely, true is shown by the facts that Strete had held the office for ten years until he died,⁸ while Vache had been in office only a few months when an earlier commission was appointed, February 12, 1384, "to enquire touching waste and dilapidations in the King's manor, granges, mills, and park of Childernelangele, co. Hertford, in the time of William Strete, late keeper thereof."⁹

For whatever reasons Vache resigned in 1386, he seems not to have done so willingly, because, although John Peytevyn was appointed in 1391 to take the place of Atte Lee, and he was followed December 12, 1392, by Henry Norton, both squires of the King's Chamber,¹⁰ the

¹ *Scrope-Grosvenor Rolls*, II, 431.

² See p. 13, below.

³ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1391-96, p. 227. In 1400 this was transferred to Chaucer's friend, Sir William Beauchamp (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1399-1401, pp. 204, 220).

⁴ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1381-85, p. 311.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1385-89, p. 234.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1377-81, p. 277.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1385-89, p. 388.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1381-85, p. 420.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1388-92, p. 446, and *ibid.*, 1391-96, pp. 202-3.

latter, May 5, 1396, vacated the office to Vache whom, it was said, the King had appointed in 1383, for life;¹ and Vache held it thenceforward until his death. It was given June 9, 1408, to Richard Hay, one of the King's squires, "with the fees and wages pertaining to it and the herbage of the park, not exceeding the value of £10 yearly, as Philip la Vache, 'chivaler,' deceased, had."²

Undoubtedly the place was worth much more than the £6 a year at which it was valued when Vache was appointed, or the £10 a year at which it was rated when he died.³ Then why did Vache resign? From the date of his appointment on the commission, October 3, 1387, I have found no further mention of him until April 2, 1390, when he was sent on an embassy to treat of peace with France, being at that time captain of one of the King's forts in Picardy.⁴ From this it seems clear that he lived abroad for several years—at least between May 15, 1388, and April 8, 1390, even if he did not go earlier. November 8, 1388, his name is on the list of the captains in Picardy who were allowed to send oxen and sheep taken from the French to be fattened in England and returned without duty.⁵

The simplest interpretation I can find for these facts is that Vache because of his intimate association with the King was not sorry to have a post abroad during Gloucester's period of control, which began October, 1386, the very month of his resignation⁶ and lasted until May, 1389, when Richard suddenly took the control of affairs. Whether he went abroad immediately, and a year later had his name

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1405-8, p. 442.

² *Ibid.*

³ Strete was given the use of the lodge called "Little London" within the park, and a tun of Gascon wine yearly, or its value in money, the wine, however, not being included when the grant was confirmed by Richard II (*Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 277). Peytevyne was allowed the mills and other profits except the conies which were reserved for the use of the royal household, and he was expected to turn in 50 marks a year rent (*ibid.*, 1388-92, pp. 446, 457).

⁴ This was certainly not Calais as Beltz says, deriving his information from Rot. Franc. 11 R. II, m. 5, 14 R. II, m. 2, and 15 R. II, m. 5, as, according to the numerous references in the Rolls, Sir William Beauchamp held that post 1384-92; and in a document dated November 8, 1388, published by Rymer (*Foedera*, VII, 607), he is described as "Philippus la Vache, capitaneus castri nostri . . ."; that is, a blank is left for the name of the town, and Beauchamp is said to be captain of Calais (*ibid.*, VII, 648-49, and *passim*). Beltz, on the same authority, 17 Ric. II, m. 13, says that in 1393 Vache was captain of Guines; but this is again an error, as Thomas Swynburn is so described in the Rolls between May 24, 1391, and November 13, 1394.

⁵ Rymer, VII, 607-8.

⁶ It is worth while to note in this connection that Chaucer resigned both his offices only two months later.

added to the list of commissioners without actually serving, as a means of stopping inquiry as to his share of the blame in regard to Chiltern Langley, or whether he actually served on this commission, I have no evidence to show. His appointment as commissioner seems to me unmistakably intended to disassociate him from the mismanagement. Certainly these years were for him a time of eclipse. Until 1386 he prospered; between 1390 and 1399, he grew steadily in honor and in wealth; between 1387 and 1390 all that we know of him is that he held a foreign post.¹

From this time on, Vache's prosperity was assured. April 14, 1394, he was retained for life at a salary of 100 marks a year in addition to his other perquisites.²

In September, 1394, he had letters of protection to go to Ireland with the King.³

In November he brought a special message from the King in Ireland to the Council;⁴ and in February 11, 1395, he appointed Clifford one of his attorneys as he expected to be a year in Ireland.⁵

July 20, 1395, he was associated with the Chief Justice of the Common Bench and several other persons to receive in the King's name a recognizance for a fine of £20,000 to be paid to the King by the mayor and commonalty of Salisbury.⁶

January 2, 1396, he shared with Margery, Lady Molyns, the goods of John James Wotton forfeited for debt.⁷

In 1399, he was made Knight of the Garter and given the stall of none other than John of Gaunt himself,⁸ thus following not only his father, but his father-in-law, Clifford, who in 1398 had succeeded

¹ When the Bill of Appeal for treason against Gloucester and his friends was brought up in Parliament, September, 1397, by the King's brothers and intimate friends, four knights made themselves pledges for its prosecution. These were Sir Simon Felbrigg, Sir Philip la Vache, Sir John Littlebury, and Sir Baldwin Bereford, all Knights of the King's Chamber, and his beneficiaries by many grants. This action certainly suggests partisanship against the friends of Gloucester and intimacy with the King (*Rolls of Parl.*, III, 374).

² *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1391-96, p. 404.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

⁴ *Acts of the Privy Council*, I, 52.

⁵ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1391-96, p. 533.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 651.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1396-99, p. 49. The phrase "the King's Knight" used of him here seems to mean no more than Knight of the King's Chamber. It is used of various others, including Clifford, so that it cannot have, as Sir Harris Nicolas seemed to imply in speaking of Clifford (*Scrope-Grosvenor Rolls*, II, 430), a special significance.

⁸ Beltz, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

to the stall of Ingelram de Coucy, the Duke of Bedford. Thus Vache had the stall of King Richard's uncle; and Clifford, that of his uncle by marriage.

At this time he was chamberlain of the household of the child-queen Isabel. A document, dated July 12, 1399, commands him, with Hugh le Despenser, and other officers of her household, to obey William le Scrope, the Earl of Wiltshire, and the knights Bussy, Grene, and Bagot, to whom was then granted the keepership of Wallingford Castle.¹ He is called her chamberlain in a document of Henry IV, July 13, 1400, excusing him from attendance on the King in Scotland on that ground, and in June, 1401,² he was of the convoy that escorted the Queen to Calais, while "Dame Vache" was one of the four ladies attending her.³

October 16, 1399, he was confirmed in the keepership of the park and manor of Woodstock and of Chiltern Langley, and also of the manor, park, and lodge of Berkle (co. Oxford)—an office not mentioned before in the Rolls. This had come to him through the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Earl of Rutland to whom, November 18, 1397, Richard had granted all the lands of Queen Anne, and for it he paid a farm of 50 marks⁴ a year.

At this time he must have had an income of some hundreds of pounds from his offices, his annuity, and the revenues from his own lands; but apparently he was not yet content.

February 20, 1400, he obtained a share in the manor of Sutton Valence, Kent.⁵

December 7, 1405, he obtained a confirmation of his annuity (18th R. II) and the payment of arrears.⁶

During the first part of Henry's reign, he seems to have been in active service, though there is no sign of any very close connection with the Court. August 27, 1400, he was licensed to take bucks for the royal household from various parks and forests.⁷ In 1403, he served (July 14) on commissions of *oyer and terminer* and (September 16) of array, in Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire.⁸

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 588.

² *Ibid.*, 1399-1401, p. 323.

³ *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, I, 136-37.

⁴ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1399-1401, p. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1405-8, p. 106.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1399-1401, p. 335.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1401-5, pp. 283, 285.

That he was living at this time the life of a country gentleman is suggested by the following document, dated September 7, 1403. It states that he is to be exempt from assizes, juries, inquisitions, attaints, or recognitions, and from being made mayor, sheriff, escheator, coroner, knight of the shire, justice of the peace, collector, taxer, assessor, surveyor or controller of tenths, fifteenths or other subsidies, leader, trier, or arrayer of men at arms, hobelers, or archers, or commissioner, inquisitor, officer, minister or bailiff of the King, and grants in consideration of his old age and debility, that he shall not be compelled to go to any parts of the realm by reason of any grant of Edward III, Richard II, or the King of lands, offices, bailiwicks, annuities, and fees or force of any statute, proclamation or command of the King.¹

Although he was only fifty-seven years old, or possibly even less, the change in the royal line probably caused him to retire early. These exemptions, never so numerous as between 1399 and 1408, include many names of Richard's courtiers.

In Clifford's will (September 17, 1404) Vache is mentioned as follows:

"Now first I bequethe to Sire Phylpe la Vache, Knight, my masse-booke, and my porhoos; and my book of Tribulacion to my daughter hys wyf."

The will continues in Latin:

"Et quicquid residuum fuerit omnium et singulorum bonorum et catalorum superius neu inferius legatorum, do integre et lego Philippo la Vache Johanni Cheynee et Thomæ Clanvow militibus libere sibi possidendum," etc.²

Vache's relations with Clifford seem to have been friendly throughout, as is evinced by the various earlier deeds of land from Clifford, as well as by the terms in which he is mentioned in the will itself.

His will, dated April 25, 1407,³ is a ponderous document which throws some light on his character and much on his wealth.

After the usual opening form, he states he wished to be buried in the church of St. Giles at Chalfont. He then refers to another

¹ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1401-5, p. 256.

² *Scrope-Grosvenor Rolls*, II, 431.

³ *Prerog. Court of Canterbury, Register Marche*, fols. 16-17.

document in which he had arranged that his lands should be sold and their profits used for carrying out his will.

He requests that a black cloth be placed on his body and five tapers be set around it in honor of the five wounds of Christ.

He asks that 1,000 paupers, those who are most needy, should have each 4*d.* of his alms, as quickly as it could be given.

He leaves 10 marks for the fabric of the church of St. Giles at Chalfont, and asks that each of his servants not named in the will should be rewarded by his executors and supervisors.

He leaves his wife 36 silver dishes, 12 silver salt cellars, 6 silver chargers, 4 silver jars each measuring a pottle, and 2 each measuring a quart. He also leaves her a little silver jar standing on three lions (his coat-of-arms was three lions) with its pedestal. He leaves her also 24 silver spoons and 12 silver-gilt goblets with covers, and two goblets with covers, one of gold which was given by Isabella, recently queen of England, and another which was given on their wedding day by Joan, Princess of Wales.¹ He leaves her also 6 plain silver goblets with covers, and two silver basins marked with the cow's foot (his crest) with their two ewers (i.e., for the hand-washing at meals), and a round silver basin and its ewer, 2 silver salt cellars and 4 silver candelabra, a new missal, a silver chalice and patena, 2 silver cruets, a silver pax, and two suits of vestments with all the ornaments of the chapel.

He leaves her also each and all of his beds, sheets, coverlets, carpets, pillows, feather beds, and all embroidered feather cushions, with all the furnishings of his chamber or chambers except one bed of silk embroidered with knots; all his napery which belongs to the pantry and the buttery; and all other utensils which belong to these offices, together with utensils of lead, pewter, brass, and iron for the use of the kitchen and brewery; also all his gems and jewels and whatsoever articles of personal adornment are now in his or her possession.

He leaves her also all his two-wheeled carts (*carrectas*), with all the horses and harness belonging to them; all the *culturam terre mee vesturamque*; all his rams and ewes and lambs which are feeding in the manor of La Vache, all the bullocks and cows

¹ This probably because Sir Lewis Clifford was one of her special knights.

of his "deierie," all the swine, sows, and little pigs at La Vache, his carriage (*currum*) with its horses, cushions, carpets, and all its furnishings; all the furniture of his hall with its carpets, cushions, and everything else that belongs to it.

To Alice Spigranell, who now has two pensions for life of 4 marks and 6 marks, respectively, he gives the choice of continuing these and of relinquishing them for £40 to be paid within a half-year of his death.

He then makes provision for four women and two men, seemingly servants; provides for prayers for his soul, his wife's, his parents'; provides for poor tenants out of a possible residue; provides for the return of such *carte*, *fines*, and *munimenta* as are now in his hands, to their rightful owners.

He leaves 40s. to a tenant named Rydyng, and 46s. 8d. to be distributed "pro anima domini Guychard Dangle."

He forgives a debt of 1,000 marks to Sir William Molyns and he forgives William Alberd a *statutum* in his custody.

He names nine executors,¹ apparently clerks and chaplains; and three supervisors, his wife, Thomas Clanvowe, and Edmund Hamden. To each of his *ministrators* (=executors?) he leaves 10 marks for his trouble.

The will was probated, June 22, 1408.

Among the curious things about this will, not the least singular are the facts that there is no statement of the money returns from the sale of his lands, or indeed of any considerable sum of money at all; and there is no mention of his daughter Blanche,² who had married Richard, Lord Grey de Wilton.

The best explanation I can suggest from the facts at hand is that the bulk of the land had gone with Blanche as her dower and was now in her husband's possession, Blanche herself being dead at this time. In support of this, we find that Shenley was owned by Richard Grey de Wilton when he died in 1442,³ and also that "Shenley alias le Vaches" belonged to Margaret, the wife of Richard Grey de Wilton, when she died in 1452.⁴

¹ Among his executors was one John Skreuan. As this name with its variants, *Scriveyn(e)*, *Skryveyn(e)*, *Scryvan*, etc., is not uncommon, Professor Manly suggests that "Adam Scriveyn" may possibly have been the actual name of Chaucer's scribe.

² Beltz, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

³ *Calendar Inquisit. post mortem*, IV, 208.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

The amount of silver owned by Vache was quite extraordinary for that time; and all the other details suggest that he lived expensively.

He seems to have had less personal vanity than many of his rich contemporaries who in their wills went into great detail about their clothes and ornaments.

Why he should have been so concerned about the soul of Sir Guichard d'Angle, King Richard's military tutor, then dead twenty-seven years, I cannot in the least explain.

Sir Philip's arms were a modification of his father's, and are described by Beltz (*op. cit.*, p. 376) as follows:

Arms

Gules, 3 lions rampant, Argent, crowned Or.

Crest

A cow's foot embowed. Ermine, hoof Or.

Let us interpret the poem in the light of these facts:

Flee from the crowd (who knew it better than this courtier of many years?) and dwell with truth, and be content with what you have (surely he had enough!); for hoarded wealth brings hate, and climbing is dangerous; there is envy among the crowd, and wealth blinds everywhere. (What could describe and explain more exactly Vache's situation in 1386 and 1387, when he was criticized for mismanagement, and finally resigned one of his offices?) Don't try to enjoy more than you ought to have (for instance, don't grieve over the loss of Chiltern Langley). Do what is right so that you can counsel other folk, and truth shall prevail (if Strete was at fault, you will be cleared).

Don't make a stir to redress all that is crooked (as, for instance, Gloucester's usurpation of power), trusting in fickle Fortune. There is great rest in few obligations. Be careful not to scorn what you have because you can't have everything (or you may lose it all; i.e., if you take action for your rights, you may fare worse, and lose what you still have). Strive not as the crook with the wall (i.e., don't ruin yourself by being rash when you have no chance). Conquer yourself as you conquer others; and truth shall prevail.

Take meekly what is sent to you; wrestling for (the honors of) the world invites a fall. You are only a pilgrim in the wilderness of this world; go forth, beast, out of your stall (i.e., you who have the crest of the cow's hoof, and you who live at La Vache), and let your spirit lead you to your true home in heaven.

Then comes the special application:

Therefore, Vache, leave your old wretchedness; cease to be a slave to the world. Pray to God and He will reward you, and truth shall prevail.

Old wretchedness suggests that the lines were written sometime after Vache's troubles began; but it is impossible to define the date more closely than as probably between 1386 and 1390.

It has seemed worth while to give a detailed account of the man whom Chaucer addresses as, "Thou, Vache," in this intimate little poem. It is clear that he was neither citizen nor scholar, but, like his forefathers, primarily a country gentleman, yet not averse to the offices and perquisites to be had at Court. But most of his life centered about La Vache, which seems to have been at Shenley, and Chalfont St. Giles; the royal estates that he managed were chiefly within ten miles, hence easily reached in a few hours.

He was something of a soldier, probably a polished gentleman, and, it is safe to assume from the positions that he held, good company. He shows no trace of Clifford's leaning toward the Lollards.

The description of his household effects suggests that he was given to lavish hospitality. Did Chaucer perhaps borrow this feature for his picture of the Franklin?

To lyven in delit was ever his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,

and

An housholdere, and that a greet, was he:
Seint Julian was he in his contree.

Moreover, the Franklin held such offices as are mentioned in Vache's exemption; and certainly Vache was a *vavasour*.

More light on Vache's relations with Chaucer may appear when all the Rolls are published. Meanwhile, his identification emphasizes the poet's connection with the Cliffords. It further suggests that Chaucer's work may be at many points more closely related to his life than has been supposed. I believe that a constant sifting of biographical and historical records of all kinds may throw considerable light on the originals of the Pilgrims, and on Chaucer's methods of dealing with his material.

For instance, I hope soon to show how the Reeve came into his life, and why the poet made him live by Baldeswelle.

EDITH RICKERT